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# THE Baptist Record

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## BRIEFS

### FED JUDGE STRIKES TX. ABORTION LAW

AUSTIN, Texas (BP) — A federal judge blocked a Texas law Nov. 22 aimed at protecting unborn babies from dismemberment abortions. U.S. District Judge Lee Yearick, a George W. Bush nominee to the federal bench, placed a permanent injunction on Senate Bill 8, calling the legislation unconstitutional. "We will defend Senate Bill 8 all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary," said Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton. Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and West Virginia also have dismemberment abortion bans currently on the books.

### DILBECK IS NOMINEE FOR TOP OKLA. POST

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) board members will meet Dec. 11 to consider a recommendation to make Hance Dilbeck, pastor of Quail Springs Church in Oklahoma City, since 2003, the next BGCO executive director-treasurer, replacing the retiring Anthony Jordan. Dilbeck is a native of Pawhuska, Okla. He holds a bachelor of arts in religion degree from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, and master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth.

### TIDENCE LANE RESTS IN PLACE OF HONOR

WHITESBURG, Tenn. (BP) — The remains of Baptist pastoral pioneer Tidence Lane have been moved to the grounds of the Tennessee church he helped found in 1785. Lane, a Revolutionary War veteran, was reinterred Oct. 21 on the property of First Church in Whitesburg, which was founded as Bent Creek Church. His remains previously had been in a family cemetery in Morristown, about two miles from the new burial site. His original burial site was given to his family as a part of a land grant from the state of North Carolina for his service in the Revolutionary War.

## Free speech ruling to have broad affect

### Religious liberty tested in former fire chief case

ATLANTA (BP and local reports) — A federal court is weighing not only former Atlanta fire chief Kelvin Cochran's right to express his beliefs but the right of others to do so as well, religious liberty advocates say.

Leigh Martin May, a district judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia in Atlanta, heard arguments Nov. 17 regarding the city's 2015 firing of Cochran. The city terminated Cochran, now a staff member of a Southern Baptist church, after he wrote a men's devotional book that advocated in a brief section the biblical view of marriage and sexuality, including that homosexual behavior is immoral.

Cochran has requested that May issue a summary judgment in his favor, while the city of Atlanta has asked the same for itself. At the hearing, May indicated a jury trial is likely next spring on issues she may not cover in a ruling she expects to issue in December, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

The case is one of a mounting number involving employees or business owners whose religious convictions about such issues as same sex marriage and homosexuality clash with the

viewpoint and mandates of various levels of government.

Kevin Theriot, the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) senior counsel who represented Cochran in the hearing, told Baptist Press (BP) in an e-mail interview, "This is a very significant case for all people of faith because if Chief Cochran loses, it means people of all faiths who believe in biblical marriage can be discriminated against by the government."

The city argued that Cochran's viewpoint was not the primary basis for his firing, contending the fire chief violated its policy in publishing the book, according to The Journal-Constitution. ADF, however, points to comments by city officials to demonstrate the book's viewpoint was the reason for Cochran's termination.

Atlanta City Council member Alex Wan told The Journal-Constitution when Cochran was suspended prior to his firing, "First and foremost, I respect each individual's right to have their own thoughts, beliefs, and opinions, but when you're a city employee and those thoughts, beliefs, and opinions are different from the city's, you have to check them at the door."

ADF is hopeful May, who was nominated to the federal

see RULING on p. 11



COCHRAN

## Lifeway to conduct 10th anniversary Christmas toy drive around country

NASHVILLE (BP) — Many children who are spending Christmas in the hospital this year will receive a stuffed animal declaring the love of Jesus from LifeWay Christian Store customers.

Now through the week before Christmas, LifeWay Stores will collect from customers toy bears, moose, and penguins each embroidered with the phrase, "Jesus Loves Me." The toys will be given to children's hospitals, mission organizations, and local ministries.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of LifeWay's Christmas stuffed animal drive. "This is one of my favorite promotions each year," said Mary Gowen, Atlanta market manager for LifeWay Christian Stores.

"Our customers get excited to participate in bringing the love of Christ to hundreds of children. It's amazing to be able to supply so many resources to local ministries through the generosity of our customers."

Gowen manages the LifeWay Store in Morrow, Ga. This year her store will be collecting stuffed animals for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, for first responders attending to children, and for Georgia Baptist Children's Homes.

Customers can purchase and donate a Jesus Loves Me stuffed animal for five dollars at LifeWay Stores this Christmas season. Last year, LifeWay collected approximately 45,000 toys. The stuffed animals collected through

LifeWay have even been featured on ESPN cable network.

"The Christmas before last I was home watching bowl games," said Jerry Sager, manager of the LifeWay Store in Birmingham, Al., and former manager of the Jackson LifeWay Store. "ESPN featured a segment of players doing charitable work in the city. Several of the players were shown visiting sick children at the Birmingham Children's Hospital."

"The final clip showed a player handing a sick child one of the stuffed animals our store had collected. These stuffed animals, with 'Jesus Loves Me' lettering on the feet, were broadcast to millions of homes all across America."

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Whose side are you on?

Another football season is about to pass since the scandal at Penn State erupted. We all remember the storyline. Jerry Sandusky worked for decades for the school's icon, head football coach Joe Paterno, who himself had been coaching at the university since the 1960s. Sandusky was convicted of molesting young boys, allegedly using his influence in the athletic department to groom and seduce the children.

The sordid details of what went on in the showers of the athletic department, in the basement of the Sandusky home, on road trips with the Penn State football team, and who knows where else are too repulsive to describe in a family newspaper. Suffice to say that many young lives were irrevocably altered by the evil actions of this man they trusted.

Almost as horrifying as the molestations were the actions taken by university officials at the highest levels to protect the prestige of the university and to keep secure their own jobs and reputations, at the expense of the children.

According to a highly critical report compiled by former Federal Bureau of Investigation head Louis Freeh at the behest of the university and disputed by the Paterno family, officials at the top of the athletic department and even the university president were aware for many years of Sandusky's sexual exploitation of children on the grounds of the university.

In Freeh's opinion, there was more than enough evidence to move on Sandusky at least a decade ago — and probably much longer. A credible report of a naked Sandusky and an equally naked boy in Penn State athletic department showers should have been enough to prompt athletic leaders and university administrators to action. It didn't.

"Our most saddening and sobering finding is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of Sandusky's child victims by the most senior leaders at Penn State," Freeh said in releasing the report. "The most powerful men at Penn State failed to take any steps for 14 years to protect the children who Sandusky victimized."

God forbid the same could be said about some of our churches, even our own Mississippi Baptist churches. Could we ever hear these

words spoken about one of our churches in Mississippi: "Our most saddening and sobering finding is the total disregard for the safety and welfare of the child victims by the most senior leaders of this church."

Let that statement ring in your ears for a little while, and then think about your church. Are there security programs in place whenever children are under the care of your church? Is there a screening process in place to root out sex offenders before they can get access to children? Is there a church staff member (or volunteer in many churches) who is personally responsible for seeing that these measures are in place, utilized, and frequently updated?

Churches and schools are teeming with potential victims for pedophiles. Schools have a defined number of teachers and other staffers trained to secure and protect the children in their care, but is the one barred volunteer in your church's preschool department on Sunday morning up to the task of protecting all the children who show up?

Just as importantly, what would you do if you personally witnessed a criminal act against a child on your church's grounds? What if you were told of the criminal act by someone else? Would you sweep it under the rug, as the leaders at Penn State did? Would you report it to law enforcement and child welfare officials, as required by law?

Would you keep quiet to protect the church? Could you be intimidated by "senior leaders" to keep your mouth shut about it? Would you be part of a wide-ranging cover up? Would you stop to consider what's at stake for the church, or would you immediately and instinctively act to protect the child?

These are not flippant questions. Any one of us could happen upon a situation that would momentarily stun us, but what would we do when we came to our senses?

All it took to bring down an American institution was one evil man, and just enough people to cover up his misdeeds. At your church, would you be counted among those who protected the children, or among those who sacrificed the children?

Think about it now, before it happens and while you have time. Then make your decision.

## Be joyful — always?

There are a few verses that most Christ followers at least, sort of, know by heart, like John 3:16, Hebrews 11:1, or this one:

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

It's a strange passage coming from someone like the Apostle Paul. He'd been bitten by snakes, shipwrecked, beaten within an inch of his life on numerous occasions, often abandoned by his friends, and maligned by people about whom he cared — and yet, he stresses the obedience of joy and thankfulness almost as much as he stresses grace and faith.

Make no mistake: this is an issue of obedience. Often we think of joy and gratitude in the realm of feelings. Either we feel joyful or thankful, or we don't. When we feel it, we do it. Obedience doesn't work that way.

Our gratitude is not a question of whether we feel thankful but whether we are willing to obey this command from the Lord. Is there a difference between giving thanks in all circumstances and giving thanks for all circumstances?

If there is, it means that no matter what situation you find yourself in, there is always something for which to be thankful for. You may not be thankful for suffering, pain, hardship, or persecution, but there are other things to lift your heart. When you consider everything that the Lord is, all that He continues to do in the world, and the next world waiting for the believer, there are plenty of reasons to say thanks, no matter what happens to be going on.

If there's not a difference, it means you believe that every circumstance, regardless of how devastating or marvelous, has come from God. Since you know God is for you, not against you, you can be thankful for the circumstance even if you are doing so in faith. You are thankful because you believe



### Guest opinion

with Michael Kelley

that ultimately good will come of it.

I think people love Jesus and believe both of these things. At the end of the day, both sets of believers are thankful.

In my own life, I have seen how, over time, I became more thankful for. Over time, and with perspective, I began to see the invisible hand of God moving in times that, in the moment, I could not see. I began to reflect on God's providential care and love and wisdom even when He may have seemed so significantly absent. I see how He has shaped me and guided me into a deeper experience of Jesus.

To bring it full circle, notice that the command is to give thanks in all circumstances. That's what you can do right now, even if you don't feel like it. You can practice the discipline of gratitude by putting to work the grace of God, in general and in particular, in your life.

As you do that, think back a bit. Think back to those moments when you thought you would never have another reason to feel thankful again. Think back, and then look and see the redemptive hand of God at work because of those times. Maybe this is the year that are not only obediently thankful in, but also being thankful for.

Kelley ([michaelkelley.com](http://michaelkelley.com)) is director of groups ministry for LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

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# Montana brawler-turned-pastor leaving big footprints

NOXON, Mont. (BP) — There was a petition circulating to remove Jim Webley from town, when God intervened and changed not only life but the course of a church and a Montana community.

In his early 20s, Webley was working in the gold mines of Nevada. Entrenched in a rough lifestyle of drugs and alcohol, his frequent brawling had "put some people in the hospital," he told Baptist Press.

People just wanted him to leave town.

One Sunday morning, Webley was driving his young daughter Sara to get milkshakes when they passed a little white Baptist church building in the Nevada community.

"I absolutely never went to church down there, but I could feel God pulling me in that direction," Webley recounted. "He was telling me I needed to get into church."

Webley had a very recognizable eight-inch jet lift on his '78 Chevy, so he parked behind the church in hopes his buddies wouldn't drive by and see his truck.

"I remember walking into church with Sara and every person in that congregation knew me, and I think they were flabbergasted to see me coming through those doors," Webley said. "The pastor was probably 10 minutes into his sermon and he just kind of stopped preaching and stared at me."

"I was wearing an Ozzy Osbourne shirt with the sleeves cut off. On the front he's holding a dove and on the back he's got the dove's head in his mouth."

Webley and his daughter quickly sat down, and he remembers being disgusted with the pastor.

"He'd be preaching and he'd be trying to be funny, but it just made me madder. Then he said, 'The Word of God says,' and he

"Before Christ, he fought with his fists against his fellow men with a terrifying ferocity. Today, he fights with spiritual weapons for his fellow men with God-glorifying determination."

Barrett Duke

executive director of the Montana Southern Baptist Convention

would read from the Bible, and I remember sitting there going, 'There's such power in that.'

"I was taken aback by the Word of God."

After the service, no one approached Webley to talk. When he got home, his wife Melissa didn't believe he had been to church. He went back the next Sunday, this time as well-dressed as he could manage.

Soon he acknowledged he needed to clean up his life — no more selling drugs, no more fighting.

"I was going to try to be a better person," Webley said.

He moved his family up to Montana where he was raised, so he could escape the influence of his friends in Nevada.

The Webleys had lived there about six months when Melissa asked if they were going to look for a church. Webley replied, "Why would we go to church? We're doing so good."

He had stopped selling drugs. He said there was very little fighting, and he was only "smoking pot and drinking."

"I thought God would be pleased with me because I cleaned up my life so well," Webley said. "I thought church was just where you learned to clean up."

At Melissa's insistence, they drove around and found Troy

Community Church in Troy, Mt. There they heard the Gospel for the first time, and Webley realized it wasn't his works that mattered but what Christ did on the cross.

He went to church for a while and grilled pastor Cam Foote with questions, but Webley still wasn't convinced God even existed. A few months later that changed when he was sitting in church and became convinced God was real.

"I thought, 'I've been fooling myself, pretending that I don't understand or I don't know,'" Webley said, having realized his options were to stop going to church and live the life he wanted and go to hell, or give his life to Christ and serve Him.

"It was kind of a no brainer at that point," so Webley went forward that Sunday and gave his life to Christ at the age of 28. When he went home, he went through his house and gathered up his heavy metal shirts and CDs — anything he thought God wouldn't want in his house — threw them in a burn barrel in the backyard, dumped gas on the pile, and lit it.

"I told God, 'Whatever You want to do with my life, I'll do it,'" he recalled.

The pastor suggested Webley might be helped in his walk if he met with the youth on Sundays rather than the adults. One Sunday the teacher didn't show up, and Foote asked Webley to teach the lesson. He had no idea what to do but simply went by the lesson plan.

Before long, he became the youth pastor.

Seven years later, Foote began nudging Webley toward leading a church plant in Noxon, about an hour south of Troy. Noxon was the last place Webley wanted to go. When he passed Noxon on the interstate, he couldn't even bear to look over toward the town because of bad memories.



JIM WEBLEY AND FRIEND

Webley lived in Noxon while in elementary school. It was in Noxon that his parents' marriage unraveled and a man intentionally burned down their house.

Noxon had a bad reputation for being home to a militia and later a white supremacist group.

Webley had been teaching the youth to surrender to God's call on their lives, and he knew he had to do it too.

He agreed to speak with the pastor search committee at the church plant, Baptist Mountain Church.

At the end of the meeting, a woman approached him and said two items were particularly important to the church. First, she explained, they had a potluck every Sunday after church and wanted his assurance that the potlucks could continue.

Secondly, they "didn't want a lot of new people coming in," she stressed.

"She said, 'There's a bad element here in Noxon and these people that come in ruin the fellowship and ruin the unity of the church, and we just don't want a whole lot of these people coming in,'" Webley said.

Webley told the search committee that he expected church members to give up their seats for new people, and if they called him as pastor they would not have another potluck until the spiritual issue was cleared up.

They called him as pastor and the first Sunday, when he told them that would be their

last potluck, "that pretty much destroyed the church."

The congregation went from about 25 to six people in one week, Webley said, but he was going to preach to an empty room until God told him to stop. From there, God started adding families and the church has seen a steady increase not only in numbers but in maturity.

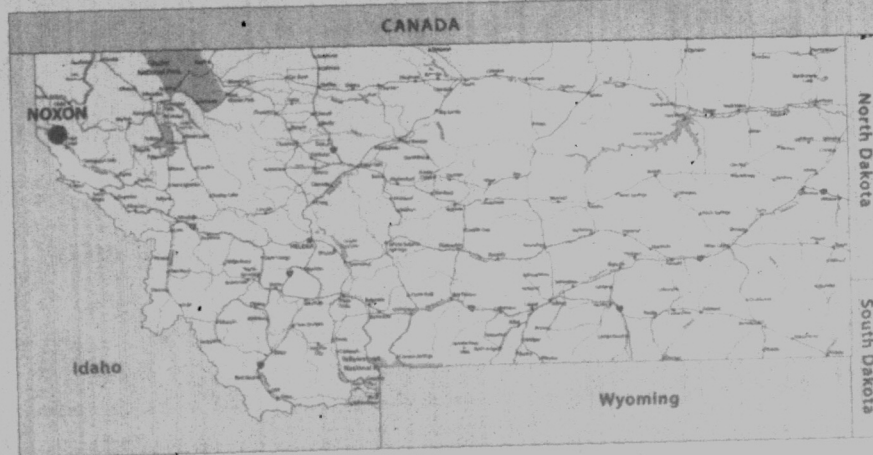
During the summer months, the church averages more than 100 on Sundays, and in the winter closer to 65, Webley said. The church was about \$150,000 in debt with no congregation when Webley started as pastor, but they were debt-free within a few years. This summer they built a new worship center.

The community of about 300 people has changed as well. A few years ago there was a bad drug problem, "but we ended up getting that cleared up," Webley said.

"That church has a tremendous impact on that town," Foote told BP. "It has radically transformed that town, and Jim's ministry there is phenomenal."

Webley is bivocational, also working in carpentry and as a guide for deer and elk hunting.

Barrett Duke, executive director of the Montana Southern Baptist Convention, told BP Webley is a perfect example of the making of a Saul-to-Paul disciple. "Before Christ, he fought with his fists against his fellow men with a terrifying ferocity. Today, he fights with spiritual weapons for his fellow men with God-glorifying determination."



Thanksgiving is much more than a day. It is an attitude. I love the fact that our country has a day when we pause and give thanks. For many of us, it's a day when we give thanks to God for the many provisions He has made for us and the blessings He has poured out upon us. Whether those provisions and blessings are exemplified in our country or our family or our health or our church, ultimately it is an all-encompassing connection with our God. Maybe it was that kind of thought that the Apostle Paul was being led by the Spirit of God to look at when he said, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

Like most special days and holidays, Thanksgiving generally comes and goes so quickly. We move on to whatever is next, but before I turn loose of Thanksgiving and move into Christmas mode, I'd like to share with you some reflections about Thanksgiving, a day that continues to live in all of our lives.

One reflection is this: Thanksgiving has to do with food. I am so thankful that my family had far too much to eat, rather than having to worry about whether they would have a meal at all. In fact, a large percentage of us, not only the Futral family but in our Mississippi and America families, rather than worrying about whether we will have another meal we are worried about eating too much at every one of our meals. We live in a land of plenty to the point that we cannot help but pause at Thanksgiving and thank God for answering our prayers.

When we pray that part of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily



## Post-Thanksgiving Thoughts

bread..." (Matt. 6:11), we could insert another phrase: "...and help us not to feel obligated to eat everything in sight." I'm confident that many of you were thoughtful enough at Thanksgiving to share with those with whom you may have come in contact (or actively sought out) who didn't have enough. Also, we do not need to forget them on the days of the year other than Thanksgiving.

Historically, these days we call holidays are filled with so much overeating that the general population will gain a few pounds and overindulge to the extent that we will be less healthy when the holidays are over. Stop today and give thanks to God if you and your family were able to enjoy way too much food on Thanksgiving, rather than having to deal with the uncertainty of your food supply every day of the year.

A second thought that came to my heart had to do with fighting. How

thankful I am that most of my family were worried about which team would win or lose a football game and were not at all fearful of whether or not our country would win or lose a war. I have lived through war-torn times in our country — the Korean War and Vietnam and other hot spots that might have just erupted and we wondered what would become of those involved in deadly conflict.

I know there are enemies that would love to destroy us even now, and I do know that there are those who live in anxiety and fear that some terrorist will randomly select a place and time that will injure or destroy them. We have been wonderfully wrapped in peace and security so often for so many days and years that Thanksgiving affords us a glorious opportunity to pause and thank God for the peace we have enjoyed. Life is always filled with uncertainties and while that is true for every one of us, the believer can

listen to Jesus' words that will give us peace in the midst of the turmoil.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). Jesus is telling us that He will be with us in every day in every way, that He will walk with us when the storm clouds are approaching and still be there with us when the sun bursts forth on a new day. Trust Him and give thanks for His presence in your life.

That brings me to the third item. I am daily and eternally thankful that we have a living, vibrant faith. It is a faith centered on Jesus Christ, our ever-living Savior. It is not a life anchored just in circumstances. It may shift like the wind, but it is a hope that is anchored in Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday and will be the same all future days (Heb. 13:8). At some point, every one of us will deal with disruptions in our lives. The shift of landscape and circumstances crash in on all of us, and the spin-up of some tornadic wind will either come your way or close by.

In the midst of whatever may be taking place, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). He comes at Thanksgiving, and He comes the day after and the day after the day after, and He will be with you today. I know that as you read this, we are several days past Thanksgiving Day in our country but pause long enough today to consider giving thanks again for food, peace, and your faith that could be triumphant, heartwarming, and life-changing even this day.

The author can be contacted at [directions@mbcb.org](mailto:directions@mbcb.org).

## Just for the Record



The ladies of **BASSFIELD CHURCH, BASSFIELD**, enjoyed a night of fellowship painting Nov. 17.



The children and youth of **NEW LIBERTY CHURCH, MORTON**, performed a Heehaw program during their 2017 fall festival.



Women and men and one small child of **CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, packed 100 boxes of items to be distributed to needy children and families locally.



Billy Galloway and his wife Ginie were honored at pastor appreciation for 17 years service at **CENTRAL CHURCH, MCNEILL**.



**FIRST CHURCH, SALTILLO**, ordained Bryson Kimbrough and Ed Priest as deacons Nov. 19. Shown are Maggie and Bryson Kimbrough, pastor Ronnie Hatfield, and Ed and Libba Priest.



## Just for the Record

► **First Church, Quitman**, is hosting a retirement celebration for AMD Grady Crowell Dec. 2, 2-4 p.m. RSVP to Bethany Morgan at (601) 776-6748.

► **Flowood Church, Flowood**, will hold a dedication service for their new worship center on Dec. 3 at 10 a.m. Allen Stephens, guest speaker.

► **Salem Church, Lake**, will present The Browder's in concert Dec. 10, 6 p.m.

► **Bethel Church, Columbus**, is presenting the musical The Birth is Only the Beginning Dec. 16, 5 and 7 p.m., and Dec. 17, 6 p.m.

## MS POSITIONS

**PERKINSTON BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH.** The Church is located in Perkinston, MS and is adjacent to Perkinston Campus of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. Please send resume to Amanda Cloy, Perkinston Baptist Church, P.O. Box 263, Perkinston, MS 39573 or email to arae1312@yahoo.com

**SOUTHWAY BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS, SEEKING PART TIME MUSIC MINISTER.** Send resume to Angie King at kjeffangle@yahoo.com.

**WYNDOLE BAPTIST CHURCH, TERRY, MS IS TAKING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF FINANCIAL SECRETARY.** This position is 20 hrs weekly. Familiar with Microsoft Excel is recommended and experience with PowerChurch would be helpful but not necessary. Interested persons should email a resume to the Senior Pastor, at jsmith4615@aol.com.

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# Shooting massacres won't stop churches' mission, leaders say

**SUTHERLAND SPRINGS, Texas (BP)** — Church shootings like the massacre at First Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, will not intimidate the body of Christ, says Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, in a Washington Post opinion piece.

"The goal the gunman sought, to terrorize worshippers, has been attempted constantly over the centuries around the world by cold, rational governments and terrorist groups — all thinking that they could, by the trauma of violence, snuff out churches, or at least intimidate those churches into hiding from one another."

"Such violent tactics always end up with the exact opposite of what the intimidators intend: a resilient church that, if anything, moves forward with even more purpose than before," Moore wrote.

For some, the Sutherland Springs slayings called to mind previous church shootings like a 1999 incident at Wedgwood Church in Fort Worth, Texas; a 2009 incident at First Church in Maryville, Ill.; and a 1980 incident at First Church in Daingerfield, Texas.

Moore wrote that those who kill followers of Jesus apparently assume "that gunfire or poison gas or mass beheadings will show Christians how powerless we are. That is true. They assume that this sense of powerlessness will rob the community of its will to be the church. That is false."

Because of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, death is not the endpoint for Christians, Moore wrote. "That's why churches long have stood firm and even flourished amid violence. To eradicate churches, our opponents will need a better strategy."

Southern Baptist congregations that have experienced shootings offer testimony to support Moore's assertions.

Jeff Laster, then a Southwestern Seminary student and head of facilities for Wedgwood Church, was among the wounded. He told Baptist Press (BP) the church has not allowed Satan to claim a victory due to the shooting.

Hundreds have been baptized at Wedgwood Church in the ensuing years, said Laster, who is now the church's associate pastor for administration. At least one sister church has been planted because of the congregation's labors.

"Going through [the shooting] allowed us to be able to minister to people and help them in a way that I don't



**FAITH'S ECHO** — U.S. Vice-President Mike Pence speaks at a Nov. 8 memorial service in Floresville, Texas, near the scene of the Nov. 5 shooting massacre at First Church, Sutherland Springs. "Whatever animated the evil that descended on that church Sunday, if the attacker's desire was to silence the testimony of faith, he failed," Pence said. "The voice of faith, the witness of faith, in that small church in that small town now echoes across the world." (Photo courtesy of the Southern Baptist TEXAN)

think we could have before," Laster said, "and not just from a shooting perspective but in other ways. Any time you've gone through something that traumatic, it either makes you or breaks you. If you allow it to, it can damage the church body."

In subsequent years, Wedgwood Church has been able to help sister churches that experienced violence, including First Church in Maryville when its pastor Fred Winters was fatally shot while preaching at a 2009 worship service. Then-Wedgwood Church pastor Al Meredith spent a week-end with the Maryville church, comforting and helping the congregation, Laster said.

Nate Adams, executive director of the Illinois Baptist State Association, said that in the eight years since the Maryville shooting, "God's grace has eclipsed that tragedy over and over again."

"The people and the leadership there have trusted Him through pain and then healing and then renewal and then the good that only God can bring out of such pain," Adams told BP in written comments.

"Those who were there that day, and those of us who were touched deeply by it later, are somehow stronger and deeper and closer to the Lord because of it and that's a miracle that only God can bring out of such tragedy."

Another congregation to experience God's steadying hand following violence was First Church in Daingerfield, Texas, where in 1980 a gunman shot 15 people during a worship service, killing five. A documentary film titled Faith Under Fire, traced how the massacre led some church attendees to experience crises of faith as well

as nightmares, divorce, and thoughts of revenge.

Nevertheless, then-pastor John Stone told BP some two decades later.

"As painful as it is to remember, it is also something you don't want to forget because if you do, you also forget the faithfulness of God to His people. The Scripture is true: 'In all things God works for the good of those who love Him and who have been called according to His purpose.'"

The Daingerfield church today continues to minister in its east Texas community, with an average worship attendance of 110, according to data from the Southern Baptist Convention's Annual Church Profile.

Pastor Danny Broughton told BP the father of a member of First Church, Daingerfield, was among the dead at First Church, Sutherland Springs. His child and others at the Daingerfield church have resolved to write letters of comfort to the believers in Sutherland Springs.

"Tomorrow is not a guarantee, so for this congregation, I have seen enjoyment and urgency to continue the work of Christ," Broughton noted.

Yet another congregation to experience victory after tragedy is Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C.

A year after a young white supremacist shot and killed nine African American worshippers at Mother Emanuel in 2015, a victim's husband told BP the tragedy led some people to testify "about the fact that they were racist, and they've repented and confessed."

The church is still transitioning "from mourning to healing," he stressed.

# discern

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# Mission: Dignity — lifeline for Christ's servants in need

**DALLAS (BP)** — After growing up a preacher's daughter, Estela Rangel had only one request of her husband David when they married: "Never become a pastor."

As a child, she had felt pressure to be perfect in the eyes of the church and she wanted a different life as an adult, "but God had His plans," she said.

After five years of marriage, David began to talk with her about the call he felt to become a pastor. The two were volunteering at that time in the bus ministry of the Hispanic mission church where Estela's father was pastor, and David felt a pull on his heart to pursue full-time ministry.

"I know that without your help, I won't get anywhere," Estela said David told her, "so I agreed to support him but not wholeheartedly."

The Rangels served for five years before Estela began to feel as though she had fully surrendered to her life as a pastor's wife. "I realized that I had to stop asking, 'What are people going to say and think about me?' and start asking, 'What is God going to do and how can I be a part of it?'"

Not long after Estela began to embrace her call to ministry as a pastor's wife, David chose to step away from pastoring for a time. The Rangels knew that if they were going to lead a church, they both needed to be all in.

When the time came to return to the pastorate, they promised one another — and the Lord — they would give 100%. "It's like we read in the Old Testament: 'Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15, NKJV)."

That they did. Estela and David faithfully ministered for 35 years, starting four Spanish-speaking churches and taking numerous mission trips to both

Guatemala and Mexico before he died in 2014.

"God gave my husband the heart of a pastor and even when he was sick, he never let his illness keep him from serving God," she said.

After David passed away, Estela was faced with the financial burden of covering a mortgage and other bills on her own. Feeling like she had nowhere to turn, Estela said she remembered David contacting Mission: Dignity on behalf of her mother, Josefa de La Rosa.

As a financially-needy pastor's widow, Josefa has received a monthly grant since 2006 from Mission: Dignity, the ministry to retired pastors and their widows administered by GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas.

Estela reached out in hopes that she could be assisted as well. Not long after applying, Estela learned that she would soon receive a monthly grant from Mission: Dignity.

Now, mother and daughter are able to worry less about making ends meet.

While Estela and Josefa both said they miss their husbands, they see signs of God's faithfulness every day. In fact, just last spring six generations of their family joined together to celebrate Josefa's 90th birthday.

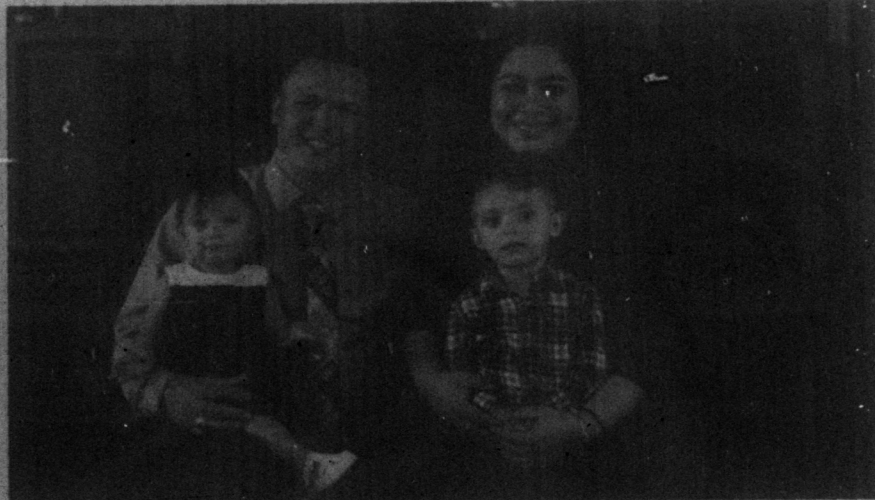
Reflecting on her life as a pastor's wife she wasn't always sure she wanted, Estela is thankful she trusted in and ultimately surrendered to God's plan.

"God promises He will never leave us or forsake us," she said, "and that is the most wonderful feeling."

*Editor's note: Mission: Dignity, online at [missiondignity.org](http://missiondignity.org), provides financial assistance to more than 1,800 retired Southern Baptist ministers, workers, and their widows through the generous donations of Southern Baptists everywhere.*



**JUST GETTING BY** — Estela Rangel (left) and her mother Josefa de La Rosa, pastors' widows, see Mission: Dignity as an important component in the lives of needy retired pastors and their widows. (BP photo courtesy of GuideStone Financial Resources)



**ORDINATION SERVICE** — Jorge Santiago, his wife Rebeca, and their two children Sebastian and Sophia pose for a family photo after his ordination in Maryland before moving in July to serve as church planting missionaries in Puerto Rico — soon to be devastated by Hurricane Maria. (BP photo courtesy of Jorge Santiago)

## Hurricane has opened many doors, NAMB missionary says

**COMETIO, Puerto Rico (BP)** — Even in the aftermath of Puerto Rico's devastation from Hurricane Maria, church planting missionary Jorge Santiago has been experiencing the truth of Romans 8:28 that all things can work together for good.

In July, Jorge and his wife Rebeca moved to Puerto Rico with their two children Sebastian and Sophia to serve as North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planting missionaries in Comerio, a municipality of 20,000 about 30 miles south of San Juan.

"Right after the storm, we just focused on helping people. We started looking for resources, food, and water so that we could take it to Comerio," Jorge recalled.

Southern Baptist pastors on the island have rallied together with pastors from other denominations to help one another in their mission to serve those in need. As Jorge prayed and ventured to find food and other resources, he noticed both from personal experience and others' stories just how difficult it was to wash clothes by hand.

Jorge saw different groups passing out food and water but no one was seeking to meet the need of helping people clean their clothes.

"My wife's dad is a pastor whose church sent us some money," Jorge said. Most of the money was used by Jorge to buy three badly-needed washing machines.

He was eventually able to acquire three more washing machines and start a community outreach called Proyecto Mi Ropa Limpia (My Clean Clothes Project). "God hasn't stopped giving to us," Jorge said, "and

**ONLINE**  
Visit [sendrelief.org](http://sendrelief.org) to volunteer or donate funds to the continuing disaster relief efforts for men, women and children in Puerto Rico who still need aid as they recover from the devastation of Hurricane Maria.

we haven't stopped giving to the people everything that comes our way."

Jorge and his family have been hard at work ministering in Comerio, leaving for the town around 4:30 in the morning and not returning to their base in San Lorenzo, 30 miles to the east, until 8:30 or 9:00 at night.

Rebeca manages the washing machines while Jorge travels around searching for food and water and distributing what he is able to find.

Jorge received one of the pastor packs that NAMB's Send Relief ministry sent to Puerto Rico. He said the package arrived at a time when he was having difficulty finding resources.

Jorge said whenever he went to on a search, he would pray and ask God to lead him to where the resources would be. He said after three days of not finding anything, he received a phone call telling him to go to the Send Relief warehouse.

"Then, when I saw [the pastor package], I started crying because I saw all the things they brought to us," Santiago recounted.

The generator that was included in the package is being used to power some of the washing machines for My Clean Clothes Project, and the other food and resources have been a boost for his ministry to the community.

"God gave us the privilege to show the people how committed we are to them and to God," Jorge said. "We get to live the Gospel by serving the people."

Initially, Jorge and his family had been planning to start church services in January. Hurricane Maria changed those plans, however, and Sunday, Nov. 12, Jorge had the opportunity to preach the Gospel and pray with a group of people as they gathered to share a hot meal.

"It is good, all that we are doing right now to help serve people," he said. "It's important to the people, but more important than that is the need to share the Gospel."

A passage from Mark 1:32-38 helped Jorge see that it was time to start preaching. The community was open. "People every day started asking me what my church is, but I don't even have a church yet. They kept asking me the time of the service, and they wanted to hear the Word of God."

Their plan is to keep gathering with people every Sunday and preaching the Word. The way that Jorge and Rebeca have been serving the community in the name of Jesus has opened the door for the Gospel and made him eager to preach.

"We are not here to play or waste our time or God's time," Jorge said. "We are here with a mission, and we are here to accomplish our mission."

Jorge continues to move toward an official launch for the church but in the meantime, he and other churches like his will make use of resources that arrive through financial donations made through Send Relief.



# New surgery technique exciting to pro-lifers

**HOUSTON (BP and local reports)** — Surgeons at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston recently performed an innovative new surgery on an unborn baby boy at 24 weeks gestation that is sure to add authority to the pro-life argument, disputed by abortion supporters, that what is growing in a mother's body is actually a thriving human being and not just a "product of conception."

Doctors removed the mother's uterus but left it attached internal-

ly and then operated on the child through tiny slits in the womb, The New York Times reported.

Doctors diagnosed the baby's spina bifida condition following an ultrasound at 13 weeks. Spina bifida is a birth defect in which the spinal column does not close completely during gestation, leaving nerves exposed. It can cause both cognitive and physical disabilities.

The medical team told the parents their baby's brain stem was slipping down into the spi-

nal column and the amniotic fluid, which becomes toxic to the exposed nerves, would likely cause more damage over time.

Initially, doctors pushed for an abortion but the parents chose to give their little boy a chance through the experimental operation. The parents know their baby will still likely suffer some damage from the defect, but they hope the procedure will enhance his quality of life.

"We're strong believers in God, and we're at peace," the grand-

mother told the Times. "This baby is going to be so loved."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville and a WORLD board member, pointed out in his podcast The Briefing the contradiction between secular news media's support of the cutting-edge surgery and a woman's legal right to abort her unborn baby, calling it "a form of undisguised moral insanity."

Mohler added that people should be thankful for what this

surgery and the Times' reporting of it represents. "What we see here is a chink in the pro-abortion armor. What we see here is irrefutable evidence, even visual as well as verbal evidence, of what it means that unborn life in the womb is a baby."

*Editor's note: Used by permission of WORLD News Service, a division of WORLD Magazine (worldmag.com) based in Asheville, N.C. Edited for style.*

## Missionary's retirement doesn't mean he's finished

**HURRICANE, W.Va. (BP and local reports)** — When God first called Bill Barker as a missionary to Appalachia in the spring of 2001, the veteran pastor of more than 30 years — and a native of the region — got down on his knees and prayed.

"Lord, what is the message I need to take?" Barker said he asked God.

The answer to his prayer came through Scripture in Matthew 9:35-38, the passage where Jesus sees the multitudes and is moved with compassion: "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Barker has preached that passage 1,500 times, prayed it, and seen it answered countless times over the years.

While Barker has been leading the Appalachian Regional Ministry (ARM), Southern Baptist churches have sent more than one million short-term volunteers to the region. Another 300 people have moved there to serve full time.

Barker is retiring at the end of December after more than 16 years as a North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary. He has also overseen the Mississippi River Ministry (MRM), which includes Mississippi, since 2012.

The two organizations are NAMB ministries that mobilize Southern Baptists to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the two regions through evangelism, church planting, and church strengthening.

As Barker looked back over his missionary service, he noted several developments that stand out.

A Gospel tract written by ARM volunteers has been distributed to more than 1.6 million people. The tract led to a correspondence Bible class initiated by ARM, now led by local churches and completed by more than 5,000 people.

Hundreds have come to faith in Christ through it, including several dozen men in prison.

Barker has also appreciated the opportunity to connect with and speak to thousands of Southern Baptists, traveling over a million miles during the course of his ministry. In a typical year, he has spoken at 125 churches, 10-20 Baptist associations, and Woman's Missionary Union groups.

"God has enabled me to be out there and be among Southern Baptists and talk about His work," Barker said of the ministry that has led to 77,000 professions of faith. "It has been a marvel to see God use this old boy from the head of a hollow in West Virginia in a manner such as this."

In recent years, Barker has been greatly encouraged by growth in ARM's Christmas Backpack Ministry in partnership with eight state conventions. Developed from a shoebox ministry, it provides gifts, necessities, and fun items to impoverished children throughout Appalachian and Mississippi River regions, expanding from 300 shoeboxes in 2012 to an expectation of 65,000 backpacks this year.

Miracles like that have been plentiful in Barker's experience. "I wake up every morning wondering what miracle God is going to do today," he said. "I've seen God do small miracles. I've seen Him do big miracles."

Barker started seeing those miracles in his first year with ARM. In February 2002, he visited Larry and Bessie McPeck to learn more about their ministry helping young mothers keep their babies. In the three months before Barker arrived they'd helped 180 women, but they were broke.

"I have no money to give you," Barker told the couple before praying with them and leaving. That night a call came to Barker's cellphone in a location where he typically did not have cell coverage and hasn't since. It was from a woman who had heard Barker speak at her church two weeks earlier in South Carolina.

"God has given me the ability to understand invest-



**RETIRING** — Bill Barker, director of Appalachian Regional Ministry, picks up donated clothes sent to the ministry in an assortment of cardboard boxes. After 16 years of service as a North American Mission Board missionary, Barker is retiring at the end of this year. (NAMB photo)

ments, and I received an inheritance," the woman told Barker. "I want to send you the tithe off of that to help people in Kentucky. God has told me people in Kentucky need help."

Barker thought the woman would send him \$20 or so. Two days later he received a check from her for \$10,000, which substantially helped fund the McPeeks' pro-life ministry.

Miracles have kept coming. Just a few years ago, Barker got a call from a woman in Jacksonville, FL, who had four boxes of discontinued baby clothes she wanted to give. Each box had around 40 outfits, but there was a catch. Someone had to pay for the shipping — about \$20 per box.

Barker started calling ministries in Appalachia that he believed could use the clothing but none of them could pay for the shipping. The next day he got another call from the woman in Jacksonville.

"Mr. Barker, I hate to tell you this. We don't have four boxes of baby clothes," the woman told him. "To tell you the truth, I have 26 pallets of baby items. If you could tell me where they need to go, I've called in a favor and can get it hauled from Jacksonville to anywhere in Kentucky or West Virginia, provided it's on the Interstate."

Meanwhile, unknown to Barker, Keith Decker of Cedar Ridge Ministries in eastern Kentucky had noticed an overwhelming number of poorly clothed, malnourished babies in their area. Wanting to help, Decker and his wife decided to host a baby shower for the mothers.

On the same Friday Barker had received the first call from the Jacksonville woman, Decker had posted a notice on Facebook about the shower, hoping to help 35-50 women thanks to a partner in South Carolina. Instead, 1,000 wom-

en signed up to be a part of the baby shower.

Just moments after Barker learned about the 26 pallets of baby clothes, Decker called him in a panic over the situation. When the two realized the unique timing of the two calls, they knew God had come through again.

"It has been 16-and-a-half years of miracles like those," Barker said.

Barker expects to stay active in Appalachian ministry after his retirement, but he doesn't yet know where that will be. NAMB's work in the region will continue through a new Send Relief ministry hub located in Kentucky.

"I am grateful to Southern Baptists for their support of Cooperative Program missions and of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and their state missions offerings in those partnership states," Barker said. "Those are the offerings that have funded this work."

# LifeWay opens anchor store at new corporate HQ



**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — After closing its iconic downtown Nashville store in 2016 due to a property sale, LifeWay Christian Stores has moved into a successor store on the campus of the Southern Baptist entity's new corporate headquarters in Nashville.

LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer said he is excited about LifeWay Stores' downtown return. The former facility at 10th Avenue and Broadway, open since 1960, was closed in January 2016 after LifeWay sold its complex of buildings in preparation for building its new headquarters.

"Nashville has been a great partner to LifeWay for more than 125 years," Rainer said. "We are glad to once again serve the downtown Nashville area with a place where individuals, families, and churches can find biblical solutions as they seek to know and serve God."

The new store is located at One LifeWay Plaza in the Capitol View development along 11th Avenue North.

"Our prayer is for LifeWay Christian Stores to be a place where people can find great ministry resources and fellowship," Rainer said.

The Capitol View store will be LifeWay's fifth in the Nashville area. In operation for more than 90 years, LifeWay Christian Stores is the largest Christian bookstore chain in the United States with more than 170 stores nationwide.

The stores are owned and operated by LifeWay Christian Resources, formerly known as the Baptist Sunday School Board, with headquarters in Nashville. The non-profit publishing and retail company is known for publishing best-selling author Beth Moore, the New York Times bestseller *The Love Dare*, the Christian Standard Bible translation, and other Christian resources.

LifeWay Christian Stores in Mississippi are located in Gulfport, Jackson, Meridian, Southaven, and Tupelo. For more information and store locator service, visit [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

## First Person: Five challenges for today's preaching

By Doug Mize  
Correspondent

When Martin Luther banged his mallet into the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg 500 years ago, he corrected the church and its leaders. Today, as we lament the downturn in baptisms and ministry effectiveness in many of our churches, it seems a good time to correct ourselves.

Luther's 95 Theses were built under the authority of Scripture. That is where we must turn again. So, in the spirit of the Five Solas, here are five biblical charges to embrace for a modern-day Reformation:

■ **Thus says the Lord.** Preaching entails sharing God's truth, not our own. A preacher must allow the Scripture to speak, not use the Bible as a "jumping off" point to spin our own ideas. Bringing the Scripture to light, including application from the text, is the only way to wield the prophetic voice, "Thus says the Lord."

The prophetic voice grows dim today. Many of us are

devoid of conviction, shying away from suggesting we have a word from God. It seems more in vogue to suggest we do not have answers from God, than that we do.

Every Sunday, however, I stand in front of people with a great need to hear what God says and little need for what I say. To quote Spurgeon: "This is the trowel and this the hammer of God's builders, this the trumpet of his watchmen and the sword of his warriors. Woe to the man who... shall preach unto you anything but a 'Thus saith the Lord,' no matter what our character or standing, give no heed to us, but cleave unto the truth as it is in Jesus."

■ **Woe is to me if I do not preach the Gospel.** Do not assume you will hear the Gospel in every church. A few years ago I listened to the latest sermons of 10 of the better-known preachers, documenting each time a tenet of the Gospel was explained as well as each mention of Jesus' name. Almost half of the sermons did not explain the Gospel — at all. Worse, one-third of the messages never mentioned the name of Christ.

Many of these messages could have been preached verbatim for religious groups who deny Christ as Savior

and would have been well-received. If you preach a message that would have you kicked out of a Jewish synagogue or Muslim mosque, then you are not doing it right. Sermons without Christ are a major epidemic today. We must agree with the Apostle Paul, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel."

■ **Am I trying to please God or men?** Luther was asked to recant his beliefs when he was on trial at the Diet of Worms. His response sends us proud chills, "Here I stand, I can do no other." In that spirit, pastors must rely on core convictions centered on pleasing God instead of surrendering to ministry pragmatism.

Our churches are being ravaged by those who constantly run after a type of success in ministry centered on success in the eyes of man, not God. Many preachers fall victim to pragmatism in an attempt to impress others. We must not think too much of ourselves, overcompensating with attempts to wax eloquently in language, or to dazzle others in our appearance or gestures. If that was the way to do ministry, it would leave out both John the Baptist and Jesus.

When a pastor acquiesces his leadership to do whatever

it takes to be successful, he surrenders himself to ever-changing leadership styles because, like the trends he is chasing, they always shift. To reverse bad trends, we need leaders with core scriptural convictions based on impressing our Savior, not our neighbors.

■ **Do the work of an evangelist.** It is a devastating testimony that many of our churches are so shallow on evangelism and led by many who are not committed to it personally. So many of our churches have no zeal for evangelism and pulpits devoid of its importance. The word evangelism has been deemed by some as out of date.

Yet Paul commended young Timothy to lead others by his example of evangelism. It is difficult to think of a scenario that will reverse our churches' steep decline in baptisms and church growth without a return to the key reason Jesus came to the earth: To seek and save the lost.

■ **Feed my sheep.** After Peter denied Jesus, he was reinstated with Jesus' challenge to "feed my sheep." Peter later commended other pastors to "shepherd the flock among you," Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, tells us that He "lays down his life for the sheep." As under-shep-

herds of Jesus, pastors have an important choice: We can act in the best interest for God's sheep or our own, but not both.

You know a faithful under-shepherd by this primary challenge: Do we serve in our own best interests or for the people God has entrusted to us? Most of the time it is not our words or demeanor exposing whom we are serving. Most of us know how to protect that. Instead it is the tough task of discerning our actions. Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., puts it this way to us ministers: "Brothers, we are shepherds — and under-shepherds at that... Shepherds who follow in the footsteps of the 'Good Shepherd' (John 10:11), the 'Chief Shepherd' (1 Peter 5:4), the 'Great Shepherd' (Hebrews 13:20), to love and lead their sheep."

These five biblical imperatives will lead us back to great purpose and true effectiveness in Gospel ministry. It is time to get back to each of them, for much is at stake.

Mize is senior pastor of First Church in Greer, S.C. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.



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T O J O F Y S O O A Z G J L R O , N S L

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Clue: R = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 24:45

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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# Church security: Training, certification boost security

SECOND IN A SEVEN-PART SERIES

By Chester L. Quarles (1944-2013)  
Correspondent

Ron Aguiar, security director for the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Ky., directs one of the largest church security units in the United States. He designed a comprehensive security ministry for the mega-church, which includes a multi-acre campus and 14 buildings.

With the approval of his pastor, he gives security training to all ushers, deacons, and greeters. These men carry communication devices to alert others of any security or safety risk. He also established a "Nehemiah's Team" of certified police officers, based on Old Testament scriptural tenets.

The Jubilee Fellowship Church in Lone Tree, Co., calls their security ministry, "Shepherd's Watch," also basing their ministry on Nehemiah, Chapter 4. Pastor John Leach asked Raleigh Rhodes, a Certified Protection Professional and security director for a regional company, to assist him in this effort.

Many forward-thinking church security and safety ministries have blended first-responding agents including police, sheriff, fire, emergency medical technicians, and medical professionals into their safety teams.

The security ministry is historically validated through Old Testament Scripture. When Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Sanballat, Tobia, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the men of Ashod decided to "stir up trouble against it." Later, the threats were so brazen that half of the men worked while the others stayed by their weapons. They carried their arms constantly because Nehemiah turned his workmen into a military force.

One of the benefits of using certified peace officers is that their agencies insure them first and authorize them to carry concealed weapons. This limits the church's liability — but does not remove it entirely. If a church member carries a concealed firearm to church, it is that individual's responsibility. However, if the church approves gun-carrying, it assumes general legal accountability with the attendant risk of civil litigation.

Whatever your church decides, your security ministry should plan together, train together, and work together. A serious incident will require extensive coordination so each team member knows what the

other members will be doing and where they will be located during an on-going emergency.

At Southeastern Christian Church, each member of Nehemiah's Team is assigned a strategically selected seat. Some of the team members are also stationed in the choir loft, primarily to protect the pastor, but are available to intervene in any emergency. The team is always ready to respond in case a visitor or a member becomes disruptive.

Some of the security team members volunteer as doorkeepers and greeters. Should they observe a problem in the parking lot or near the church grounds, they immediately initiate radio contact with other team members, lock the doors to the church, call 911, and use other appropriate deterrent procedures.

The keys to any layered security approach are to stop trouble before it intensifies, or to prevent trouble completely. By being vigilant the Guardians, the welcoming committee, and Nehemiah's Team can often spot troublemakers before they enter church buildings.

The Apostle Peter praised vigilance: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

A security ministry is not to be lightly considered. Be sure that your risk assessment is reasonable and plan accordingly. Remember to discuss the church security policies and plans with the police or sheriff's department, your local prosecutor, and your insurer.

Informing your membership is a must! Some leaders feel that members will be repelled by these procedures, but generally these applications result in a membership that feels safer in the Lord's House because of your diligence.

Whatever the title of your security and safety team, always remember that the purpose of this group is to enhance the overall ministry of your church and increase the likelihood that those in attendance at your services will come to know the saving grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Quarles, who died in October 2013, was professor emeritus of criminal justice and homeland security at the University of Mississippi, and co-author of the book, *Crime Prevention for Houses of Worship*. Copyright 2011. Used by permission. This series originally appeared periodically in *The Baptist Record* in 2011 and 2012. All rights reserved.

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director  
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### GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is humbly designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

#### NOVEMBER 1-15

##### HONORS

Ms. Vickie Cothran  
Mrs. Mattie Rials  
Dr. Bridgette L. Davis  
Mr. Tom Davis  
Mrs. Mary Hanvey  
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth M. Davis  
Rev. Joe Jackson  
Mrs. Wilda L. Butler  
Mr. Lamont Jarrell  
Ms. Katherine M. Furr  
Mr. & Mrs. Doug (Nichole) Smyly  
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Rushing  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg (Layla) Armstrong  
Mr. & Mrs. Jira Rushing  
Mr. & Mrs. Percy (Hilda) Peeler  
Mrs. Eva Nell Milton  
Mr. Charles Renfrow  
Mrs. Edna M. Gifford  
Mr. & Mrs. Justin Towery  
Mr. & Mrs. Johnny Towery, Jr.  
Billy Weeks  
Mr. & Mrs. Danny L. Cheatham

#### NOVEMBER 1-15

##### MEMORIALS

Mrs. Darlene Anderson  
The Forrest Newman Family  
Ms. Jessica Anding  
Ms. Mary Nations Smith  
Ms. Laura Kate Ball  
Junior Auxiliary of Columbia  
Ms. Albina Barbati  
Mr. & Mrs. Byron Kyle  
Mr. Tony Barnes  
Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Hawkins  
Nolain Beard  
Mr. & Mrs. Jason Ford  
Mr. Oscar Beckwell  
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Smith

Mr. Paul Bode  
Mr. & Mrs. Cody D. McKeeler, III  
Ms. Sarah Elizabeth Boone  
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Smith  
Mr. Larry Boyd  
Mr. & Mrs. Kendall Howell  
Ms. Marilyn White Brady  
The Estate of Gladys Grady  
Charlotte Hays & Judith Stahl  
Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Dunagin  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Kermit Davis  
Mr. & Mrs. James L. Dykes  
Mr. & Mrs. Ron D. Craddock  
Mr. Collins Mikell  
Mr. Joey D. Davenport  
Mrs. Mattie Rials  
Mrs. Tena Haskins  
Ms. Laila McEwen  
Ms. Mary Ellen Taylor  
Ms. Judy Broome  
Mrs. Bessie S. Kennedy  
Jahamel Buckley  
Mr. Ted Buckley  
Ms. Gayle Mosley Butler  
Leslie, DeRita & Doug Usher  
Mr. T. A. Cudwell  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard N. Humphreys  
Ms. Annie Laura Cassels  
Mrs. Doris Poole  
Mrs. Ardis Cobb  
Mr. Charlie Canova, Jr.  
Mr. Rhudy Cole  
Mr. & Mrs. Ray V. Bush  
Mr. John C. Coleman  
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Bennett  
Dodds & J. D. Gentry  
Greg, Janna & Caroline Flint  
Mr. Kendal Douglas  
Mrs. E. J. Orisham, Sr.  
Ms. Marlene Dove  
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen D. Cook  
Mr. Paul Dykes Sr.  
Ms. Gail Boyd  
Ms. Betty Gregg Evans  
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Bennett

## Kaye's Story

What does a mother do when she is losing hope and feeling as if the whole world is crashing down around her?

One desperate mother chose to fall on her knees and ask God to help. He answered her prayers through you and your Baptist Children's Village.

Kaye's story has a happy ending but she once walked a dark and destructive path. In response to bad relationships and tremendous personal loss, she turned to drugs to numb the pain and escape her life.

Soon Kaye found herself broken, abused, homeless, without transportation, and stealing food to feed her children. She was carrying her last few belongings from place to place in a trash bag. This was the downward spiral Kaye lived daily. She had hit bottom.

But God wasn't done with Kaye and her boys. There was hope on the horizon.

Desperate to make a new life for her children and herself, Kaye got help for her addiction and began to heal. Through the love and support of friends, she found a job, but it didn't come close to paying for childcare, food, housing and all the other things her family needed.

Kaye says, "I was beginning to lose hope again. I knew my babies deserved better, but I didn't want to give them up."

It was in her desperation that Kaye cried out to God for her children. She went to the internet and typed, "Christian single mothers who need help and don't want to give away their children." One search result was The Baptist Children's Village website. That's when she contacted our staff to ask for help.

Kaye found help, hope and much more at The BCV. She learned she could place her children with us and not lose custody. She also learned

she would be able to have regular visits with them and maintain their relationship. Kaye is thankful to know your gifts provided her children a stable, safe, and loving home until she can bring them home again.

"I'm not sure where my boys would be if it were not for The Baptist Children's Village. Now, they are happy, healthy and so smart. You have helped us in ways I could have never dreamed possible," says Kaye.

One special way your gifts helped Kaye and her boys was in providing them a Christmas. Kaye was so thankful for your gifts and meeting their basic needs, but she was deeply moved by the generosity of so many at Christmas.

"It's hard on a mom knowing she can't give her children something for Christmas. I had no idea The Baptist Children's Village would help with that too. You even provided Christmas stockings," says Kaye.

She is very thankful for everything you've done for she and her boys. Using her skills as a hair stylist and make-up artist, she gives back to The BCV by helping our girls at the local campus get ready for special events.

Kaye says, "I will always give back to The Baptist Children's Village in some way because you were here to help me!"

Your gifts and God's love changed Kaye's and her boys' lives forever. Kaye attended church with her boys and other BCV children and staff, and was baptized there. There are no words I can say that truly communicate the impact you're having. Thank you!

Thankfully,

Sean A. Milner  
Executive Director

P.S. There's a Christian song out now titled Making Diamonds out of Dust. That is what you did in Kaye's life. Please continue to help others like Kaye. Please give your gift today to meet the daily needs of children, provide Christmas presents, and so much more. Thank you.



## BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242. A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.



## The Gospel Message • Acts 13:26-39

I am thrilled our lessons this quarter come from the book of Acts for it is the story of the church's beginning and flourishing after Jesus' ascension. It is a story of courage, steadfastness, and obedience, which we need in great quantities today. The author is Luke, who also wrote the gospel, Luke. One could read the gospel of Luke and continue into the book of Acts without a break for it is one story. He writes in great detail the events in both books, perhaps because he is addressing his writings to Gentiles who had little knowledge of Jewish traditions and teachings, therefore giving us a front row view of our inheritance. Although this quarter's lessons begin in chapter 13, as Paul begins his missionary journeys, I encourage you to read chapters 1-12 before beginning. We learn much from this is our church history and it is soul stirring.

Although this week's lesson begins in Acts 13:26, I want to address passages previous to these. The CSB Bible describes Chapter 13 as "Preparing for the Mission Field." The first model to the modern-day church is that there must be preparation for any missionary endeavor. This preparation, however, was not in gathering supplies and funds but in something much more important. Acts

13:2-4a "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after they had fasted, prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them off... by the Holy Spirit..." (CSB) Please note it was while the church was worshiping and fasting that the Holy Spirit spoke. There was great power in this first missionary journey because they went through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Today we occasionally speak about the Holy Spirit but throughout the book of Acts, we read words like: led by the Holy Spirit or filled with the Holy Spirit. If a church body desires to be missional, it must be led by, led to, and led through the Holy Spirit's guidance. Often, we "go" only because it is expected but with little thought of the Spirit's requirements. We announce a mission trip destination and then encourage people to sign up. While

this might not be wrong, mission trips which I have participated that did not fully consult the Holy Spirit in prayer and fasting had some difficulties. Consequently, after arrival and discovering the facilities were not suitable, grumbling and complaining began. It was not long until the work became about "us" not the people nor the message we were to share.

If we are going to truly look at the book of Acts and apply it, may I suggest that

any ministry we do for Christ must be done only at the call and leading of the Holy Spirit. Because they were obedient to the Spirit, Paul

and Barnabas spoke with power and many were drawn to it. We rejoice when that is the case but be aware all things did not go well on this first missionary journey. They were faced with sorcery, jealousy, and conflict as they preached the word. Had they not been sent by the Holy Spirit, they would not have been able to endure and speak with boldness and power. On

their own, they would have given up but instead, they were unflinching.

They were given the words to say and we read them in verses 26-41. These were powerfully convicting words delivered in boldness. While some rejoiced, not everyone was eager to hear as the religious leaders intentionally incited prominent men and women to stir up persecution toward these newly appointed missionaries, eventually expelling them. (verse 50) That would not be a good ending to any mission trip! Then we read in verse 52: "And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit." Because they had the Holy Spirit they were not dismayed or discouraged.

The call to "go" is given to all of us in the Great Commission but if we do it in our own strength or because we have to, we will not have His power and often we will fail. The lesson our congregations can learn from Acts 13 is our need for intense prayer and fasting—relying on the Holy Spirit to lead us. When we do, He will guide us to the words to say and give us power to endure the hardships of spreading the gospel.

Grace is a Bible teacher and conference speaker and is a member of First Church, Clinton.



### Explore the Bible

with Cyndi Grace

## Jesus Calls • Mark 1:14-20

It has been said before, "A baby changes everything." No doubt if you are a parent, grandparent, or an older sibling, you can relate to the sentiment. Bear in mind, most of the changes are positive ones, even if they are often challenging. Young parents will learn to navigate through sleepless nights, feedings, diaper changes, fevers, vaccines, and tears. After a while, the good times come in greater frequency and you quickly lose count of the more stressful aspects of having a newborn. First-time parents will find themselves acting and talking in unexpected ways they never thought possible. That is not to mention grandparents who seemingly lose their minds in euphoria when they are around their grandchildren.

I cannot be too quick to judge those who act a bit unusual around their children. I recall when my oldest daughter was 4 years old and our family had recently moved to a new pastorate. Relocating is tough on anyone, but especially children. She was lonely, still trying to make friends and learning her new surroundings. It was more than this daddy could stand. One day I announced that she and I would be leaving after lunch to go to the moon! Her eyes lit up, she was ecstatic and

could not wait to make the journey of a lifetime.

We gathered pots and pans from the kitchen for space helmets, a blanket to keep us warm on the moon's surface, and a flashlight to help us see in our travels. We made our way into the walk-in closet, closed the door behind us and cut the lights off. After we were seated, I began to make the noise of a shuttle, and shook as we "took off." On the day my firstborn and I "went to the moon" we "saw" shooting stars, the planets, and the blue waters of Earth. We decided to return home after a bit, but not before the memories were made of our great adventure.

Over the next seven sessions, we will study a few of the powerful examples demonstrating how Jesus changes everything. Whether it was the way Christ taught, His saving power, ability to heal or even the way He meets our needs; when Christ is in our midst, things will change for the better!

The text for the session this week is Mark 1:14-20 and it provides a glimpse into the early ministry of our Lord. We read of some of the earliest recorded words and actions after the temptation of Christ following His baptism. His message? Repent! Repentance, while an unpopular subject these days in most pulpits, is essential for salvation. Let that ring in your ears for a moment. Anyone and everyone that comes to a saving faith in Jesus must first repent of their sins

and confess their need of forgiveness. Furthermore, we as Christians should not grow lax in our commitment to turn from our sins and

seek His holiness on a daily basis.

The call to follow Christ comes only after we have repented. After Christ's commands to repent we read of His selection of the first disciples. No one is exempt from the need to repent, because all are sinners. Only those who are self-righteous will not heed the call to repent of their sins.

The young disciples had no way of knowing or imagining the changes they would experience when they "left their nets and followed Him" (Mark 1:18). The stage was being set for the greatest adventure of all time. They obeyed the call of the Master and by faith, were obedient. What about you and me? Did you know God bids us to follow Him each day? Have we repented of our sins? What is God asking of you today? What do you need to let go of to be obedient and fully follow Him? When Jesus calls, what will be your response? Answering and following the call of Jesus is the most wonderful and blessed adventure you can ever take.

If you are a parent, you know the adventures never end. The 4-year-old daughter of mine I mentioned earlier is now 15. These days, I spend time with her while she sits behind the wheel of my vehicle as I teach her how to drive. This time, I am the one a bit nervous about the adventure. I wonder how silly I would look if I used the pots and pans for a helmet again? With Jesus, leave the pots and pans in the kitchen and just follow!

McKay is pastor of Harpersville Church, Harpersville.

### Bible Studies for Life

with Bobby McKay



## RULING

cont. from p. 1

bench in 2013 by U.S. President Barack Obama, will grant summary judgment to Cochran regarding his free speech and free exercise of re-

ligion claims "because the city has admitted it considered his religious speech when suspending and firing him," The-riot told BP.

He said he is confident the judge will issue "a very well-reasoned opinion."

Cochran is currently chief operating officer of Elizabeth Church, a multi-site church in the Atlanta area. He served on the Resolutions Committee at the 2016 Southern Baptist Convention meeting and presented a resolution affirming Southern

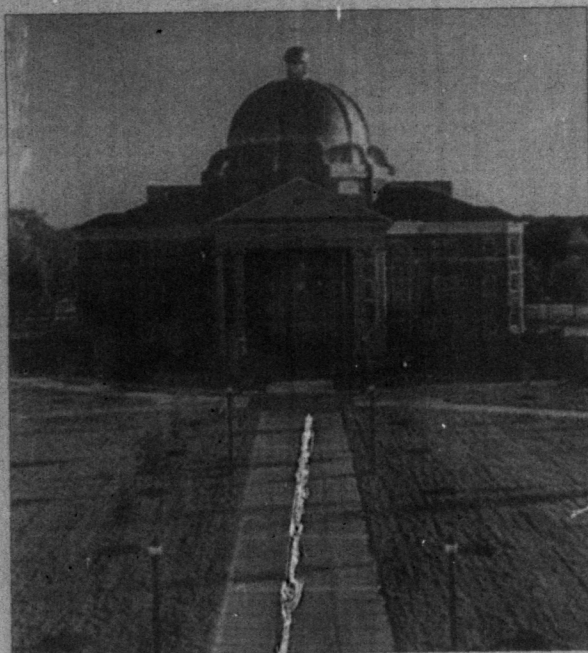
Baptists' commitment to biblical sexuality and urging protection for religious free exercise. Messengers approved the resolution.

Cochran was one of the first African-Americans to serve with the Shreveport (La.) Fire Department and eventually

became that city's fire chief. He became Atlanta's fire chief before U.S. President Obama appointed him in 2009 as U.S. Fire Administrator.

He returned to Atlanta and served as its fire chief for two years before his termination.

# Union Univ. scores big win against fed government



**THE GOOD FIGHT** — Union University in Jackson, Tenn., won a crucial victory in the nationwide battle against providing birth control and abortion-causing drugs to employees under the Obama administration's order to do so: (BP photo)

**JACKSON, Tenn. (BP)** — Union University in Jackson, Tenn., has settled its lawsuit against the federal government concerning the Obama administration's mandate through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that the Baptist-affiliated school provide abortion-causing drugs as part of its employee health plans.

Under the terms of the settlement, the U.S. government agreed that the mandate was a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and that under the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* case, it imposed a "substantial burden" on Union's free exercise of religion.

"We rejoice over this outcome in which the government acknowledges that the contraception mandate would impose a substantial burden on our exercise of religion and violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act," said Union University President Samuel W. Oliver said.

"We believe, based on the Bible, that life begins at conception. We went to court to defend religious liberty, the right to believe and to live ac-



"Rights of conscience were enshrined in the U.S. Constitution as the first freedom. I hope Union will always be a place that stands for such God-given rights."

**Samuel W. Oliver**  
Union University president

cording to those beliefs, and we are glad that religious liberty prevailed.

"Rights of conscience were enshrined in the U.S. Constitution as the first freedom. I hope Union will always be a place that stands for such God-given rights," Oliver said.

The agreement specifies that Union's employee health plans are permanently exempt from the HHS contraception mandate.

The settlement follows new rules issued Oct. 6 by the administration of current U.S. President Donald Trump to exempt entities from the mandate based on their religious beliefs.

Union filed one of 56 lawsuits involving more than 140 faith-based plaintiffs against the Obama administration mandate in 2014 that sought a judgment declaring the abortifacient mandate of the Affordable Care Act, also known as

Obamacare, violated the university's rights not only under RFRA but also under the First and Fifth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution and the Administrative Procedures Act.

"Causing the death of the embryo conflicts with Union University's beliefs based on Scripture," the Union lawsuit stated. "Therefore, Union University has religious-based objection to drugs and devices that kill the embryo and to education and counseling related to the use of these abortion-causing drugs and devices."

The lawsuit also said the mandate "forces Union University to choose between its sincerely-held religious beliefs and the government-imposed adverse consequences" of non-compliance.

As part of the settlement, the government agreed to pay the bulk of the legal fees that Union accrued.

## Protect children from computer porn, webinar speakers implore

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Churches and parents must model and emphasize a godly respect for human sexuality to protect children from the pervasive and savvy culture of pornography, said speakers in a religious webinar in mid-November.

No longer adequate are the internet filters on which parents have relied to prevent exposure to pornography, said Dean Inserra, lead pastor of City Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Tallahassee, Fla. He was the main speaker in the webinar hosted by the interfaith Religious Alliance Against Pornography (RAAP).

"Let's be wise and have filters in place, but it's got to be deeper than that. It's got to go to the heart," Inserra said. "We've got to create a different environment. We have to be distinct from the world and raise up a church that is unafraid to say as a male, these things matter."

"As a male, this is one of the greatest responsibilities that God has given me, that I respect, care for, love, look out for and protect women, especially in this area," Inserra said, referencing the #MeToo campaign that has exposed allegations of widespread sexual abuse in Hollywood, business, politics, and other arenas.

The free, one-hour webinar, *Parents, Kids, and Pornography: Attack on a Generation*, also included a panel discussion led by David Blair, director of the Church of God (COG) Department of Youth and Discipleship. Indiana COG youth director Josh Martin and DeWayne Moree, founder of the Youth Ministry Coaching Network, offered additional insight on the panel.

Research indicates that before the age of 11, 93% of boys and 62% of girls in the U.S. have viewed pornography, webinar participants said. In addition, 12% - 15% (close to 100 million) of all websites are pornographic in nature. Anxiety, depression, addiction, and peer victimization are all byproducts of porn exposure and use, speakers said.

"We need to kind of get our heads out of the sand and realize that we live in this world now that is saturated with it everywhere, and we can't control it," Inserra said. "It means that pornography is now coming to us."

Alleged and admitted sexual abuse, rape, and sexual harassment claims that have grown from the Harvey Weinstein scandal are indicative of the harm pornography has been shown to instigate, Inserra said. He described sex-

ual sin including pornography as a major contemporary evil that must be addressed in Christian discipleship.

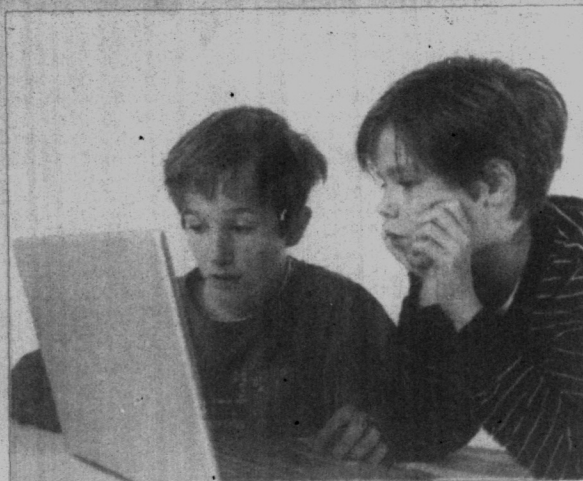
"The conversation that needs to happen in churches, that needs to happen in discipleship group, that needs to happen with parents in homes, is what does it really look like — in a porn-saturated world, in a sex-obsessed world — what does it really look like to live out that prayer of Jesus, to be in the world and not of it?" Inserra said. "It's a daily war. We walk into battle as God's missionaries every single day."

Parents should anticipate their children's exposure to porn and teach them in advance how to respond, Martin said. Among pointers offered to parents and churches during the webinar:

- Communicate the need for modesty in dress and behavior without blaming women for men's sexual failures, nor making women scapegoats.

- Counter the cultural falsehood that "boys will be boys" by teaching boys to become men who are respectful, humble, and intentionally protective of women.

- Churches must intentionally tackle the issue through modeling, training, and preaching.



**NOT ENOUGH** — Internet filters are no longer adequate to prevent children's exposure to pornography according to Dean Inserra, pastor and main speaker at the Religious Alliance Against Pornography webinar. (Photo by GoldenCov Images/Shutterstock.com)

- Students are more receptive to advice from church leaders who have taken the time to build relationships and trust.

With support from Christians, Muslims, and Jews, RAAP markets itself as an organization working "to create a broad interfaith effort to alert, educate, and mobilize all people to understand and combat pornography."

K. Marshall Williams, pastor of Nazarene Church in Philadelphia, Pa., and immediate past president of

the National African Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC); and Dan Darling, vice president for communications, at the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, are members of RAAP's advisory board.

Richard Land, retired ERLC president, and the late Adrian Rogers, former SBC president and retired senior pastor of Bellevue Church outside Memphis, served as board members in the past.